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ABSTRACT

This guidebook shows how governors and states have worked on engaging the public in education reform. It focuses on important strategies to consider during the process of building public support for education reform. It highlights state strategies for communicating about progress made toward achieving the National Education Goals and for promoting statewide systemic education reform. Suggestions include: (1) begin education reform with the facts; (2) include the public from the beginning; (3) recognize that change comes from the bottom up; (4) build momentum from a broad-based coalition; (5) know that reaching out requires resources; (6) prepare for the long haul; (7) avoid jargon; (8) use your policy and communications staff effectively; and (9) expect the unexpected. The experiences of four states--Colorado, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Florida--illustrate lessons learned from recent education-issue campaigns that were brought before the voters. The guide concludes with a discussion of a national campaign to increase public support for education improvement, the "Keep the Promise" campaign. (LMI)

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A GUIDE TO

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION REFORM

NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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A GUIDE TO

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION REFORM

NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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Since their initial meeting in 1908 to discuss interstate water problems, the Governors have worked through the National Governors' Association to deal collectively with issues of public policy and governance. The association's ongoing mission is to support the work of the Governors by providing a bipartisan forum to help shape and implement national policy and to solve state problems.

The members of the National Governors' Association are the Governors of the fifty states, the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, and the commonwealths of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico. The association has a nine-member Executive Committee, a Task Force on State Management, and three standing committees—on Economic Development and Commerce, Human Resources, and Natural Resources. Through NGA's committees, the Governors examine and develop policy and address key state and national issues. Special task forces often are created to focus gubernatorial attention on federal legislation or on state-level issues.

The association works closely with the administration and Congress on state-federal policy issues through its offices in the Hall of the States in Washington, D.C. The association serves as a vehicle for sharing knowledge of innovative programs among the states and provides technical assistance and consultant services to Governors on a wide range of management and policy issues.

The Center for Policy Research is the research and development arm of NGA. The center is a vehicle for sharing knowledge about innovative state activities, exploring the impact of federal initiatives on state government, and providing technical assistance to states. The center works in a number of policy fields, including agriculture and rural development, economic development, education, energy and environment, health, information management, social services, trade, training and employment, and transportation. The priorities for the association's research are set by the Governors.

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FOREWORD

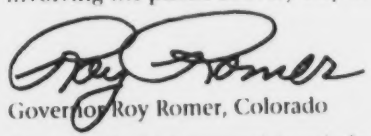
America is at a critical turning point. The challenges of today—a stagnant standard of living, inefficient systems, and citizen frustration—demand new approaches. As leaders, we must make the strategic investments to secure the future for our children and their children. Nowhere is this more important than in education. Yet, each day we are faced with tough choices about our investments in education. Without public understanding and sustained support for the necessary changes in schools, the tough choices will not be made.

Over the past ten years, much has been accomplished in education reform. Governors championed the development and adoption of the National Education Goals and have pushed for world-class content and performance standards. Efforts are underway nationwide to promote systemic education reform—changing the entire system rather than tinkering at the edges. Work is being accomplished to redefine the relationship of schools and school systems to the community, with educators and policymakers actively seeking out the advice and support of the community at large. As school-based decisionmaking evolves, it is resulting in a more active role for parents and community members as they now serve as decisionmakers in their local schools.

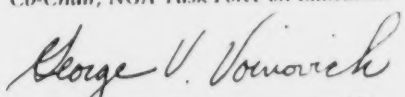
Much more remains to be accomplished. The public must better understand why change is necessary. Policymakers and educators have found that participation by students, parents, and other citizens in both school activities and the policymaking process is essential to changing the current system. Without this public support, our goal of creating a world-class, performance-based education system focused on meeting the needs of all children will remain out of reach.

This report, *A Guide to Building Public Support for Education Reform*, is intended to assist Governors and states in efforts to engage the public in education reform. The examples cited are drawn from a variety of sources—gubernatorial efforts to communicate state-level progress toward the National Education Goals, results of communications with the public on statewide systemic reform efforts, lessons learned from education issue campaigns, and a national effort to build public awareness of the need for change.

Improving American education is essential to the future of this country. Everyone must be engaged in the vision to set and reach world-class standards. Everyone also must make the tough choices necessary to create an education system that will support the attainment of that vision. This report reminds us that the key to improving our public education system is involving the public at every step along the way.



Governor Roy Romer, Colorado
Chair, National Governors' Association
Co-Chair, NGA Task Force on Education



Governor George V. Voinovich, Ohio
Co-Chair, NGA Task Force on Education

Governors are champions of education reform. In cooperation with education leaders and the business community, Governors have been active for more than a decade in promoting the need for all students to get a world-class education as an investment for the future.

Governors talk frequently about the importance of the National Education Goals they set in 1990 with the President. They discuss comprehensive or "systemic reform," not just tinkering around the edges. They have used their bully pulpit to sell reform and work with their legislatures to make education policy changes.

Despite all the effort to reform public education in the last decade, the public remains cynical. Although they generally favor improvement, many citizens do not really understand "systemic reform." "Tell us again what we've got for our dollars so far," the public says. Polls and focus groups repeatedly show that while Governors, other policymakers, and educators talk of higher standards and a richer curriculum, the public yearns for a return to the basics and old-fashioned discipline. Taxpayers and voters need to understand clearly why better schools are needed, what kind of changes are required, and who will do what. Common expectations and a common language to communicate these ideas are needed.

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It is hard for many Americans to identify the problems in the education system. As far as they can tell, schools seem to be doing pretty much the same as when they were in school. In fact, according to national assessments, American children are doing about the same now as their parents were doing two decades ago.

Simply put, the problem is that "just as good" is not good enough anymore. Students in other industrialized countries are doing much better. More important, the fundamental nature of the American economy is changing. For students to succeed individually and for the nation to maintain its standard of living, American students need more knowledge and skills—and the ability to apply both—than schools have ever been expected to deliver.

These days, frontline workers in high-performing companies are expected to be critical thinkers and not to simply follow orders or turn a bolt on an assembly line. They need to apply mathematical skills, work in teams, communicate with colleagues and customers, and use sophisticated technological tools to do their work. The skills that were once provided only to a small percentage of Americans now must be available to everyone.

Governors, education reformers, and others have learned that changes in curriculum, tests, minimum competency requirements, or teacher salaries are necessary steps in the right direction, but as separate actions these changes are not sufficient. Even if they create a few model schools, it is difficult to scale up from these models to systemwide reform. They have learned that without changes across all aspects of the system—systemic reform—schools still will not produce successful student results.

Systemic reform includes higher expectations and world-class standards for students, open-ended tests that measure what students know and can do rather than what they can "regurgitate," more local control by teachers and parents, better management of schools and school districts, and an expanded use of technology. This approach includes ensuring that the organizations and agencies that provide social services are focused on improving students' lives so they can do a better job of learning. School systems also need to routinely give birth to and nurture high-performing schools.

It was recognition of this need for systemic change that provided much of the underpinning for the six National Education Goals adopted by the Governors and the President in 1990. The six goals focus on improving education from early childhood through lifelong learning opportunities. The Governors' ten-year commitment to achieving the goals is unprecedented and goes beyond usual terms of elected office.

Goals and expectations are critical to success. Yet they are only useful if people know about them, adopt them as their own, and work toward them. Despite substantial publicity efforts to promote understanding of the National Education Goals, there still is much work to do before the goals are known by the public, by parents, and even by many educators. This guide highlights innovative ways Governors are informing citizens about state efforts to achieve the National Education Goals.

Governors have been successful in communicating the importance of education reform in their own states. They have worked with their legislatures to enact major policy changes, generated voter support for increased taxes for schools, and energized many citizens who previously had ignored the issue. In many cases, they have raised the expectations of constituents. Nevertheless, some state legislators, having already fought the battle to secure higher minimum competency requirements, better testing, and more teacher pay, are now reacting skeptically when told the "whole system" needs renovation. They are saying that they thought they already did that.

This tension also is reflected in the different ways policymakers and citizens consider education reform. When policymakers talk about school reform, they often mean higher academic achievement for students in the form of more math, more science, and more reading and writing. When the public thinks about reform, often they want schools to be safe environments—free of drugs and violence—with a renewed focus on the basics and discipline. The two notions often cross but do not always coincide. It is this failure to communicate that was the subject of the Public Agenda Foundation's report *CrossTalk*, which is recommended reading for anyone who communicates on the subject of education.

The report shows that the education reform agenda largely agreed to by policymakers and leading educators is not necessarily the public's reform agenda. What *CrossTalk* also indicates is that the public will accept the new reform agenda once it understands why it is necessary. Yet citizens need to have their own concerns addressed before they are willing to pay attention in any depth to the issues raised by policymakers and education reformers. For example, if discipline or school violence tops the agenda of parents and the community, that issue must be adequately addressed before they will pay much attention to the issue of higher standards and systemic reform.

When citizens say they are not happy with public education, usually their concerns are not directed toward their children's school or the neighborhood school but toward other schools, especially those in urban areas where many believe that the schools are beyond repair, or toward the education system as a whole. Recent polling data indicate that although students and parents may believe that they are receiving a good education, employers and college educators do not. When parents see their children and their neighbors' children get into college or find a job, it is difficult for them to see the systemic problem. Although they may be receptive to the notion that far more will eventually be required of their children, they do not demand higher standards of their schools today.

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According to a recent survey by the Harris Education Research Center:

Those agreeing that most recent graduates "learn to write well":

66% of the students agree
56% of their parents agree
18% of college educators agree
12% of employers agree

Those agreeing that high school students have "learned mathematics well":

71% of the students agree
65% of their parents agree
27% of college educators agree
22% of employers agree

Those agreeing that most high school graduates today have "the ability to read and to understand written and verbal instruction":

78% of the students agree
70% of their parents agree
41% of college educators agree
33% of employers agree

Source: Committee on Economic Development, September 1991.

According to Gallup Poll's "Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," released in September 1992, the following contradictions are evident:

18% would give the nation's public schools a grade of A (2%) or B (16%)
48% would give the nation's public schools a grade of C
18% would give the nation's public schools a grade of D
4% would give the nation's public schools a grade of F
12% do not know

But at the same time:

40% would give their local public schools a grade of A (9%) or B (31%)
33% would give their local public schools a grade of C
12% would give their local public schools a grade of D
5% would give their local public schools a grade of F
10% do not know

Among parents of public school students:

64% would give a grade of A (22%) or B (42%) to the school their oldest child attends

Public perception could change as reform efforts are targeted to all schools, from the inner city to the suburbs. A significant proportion of children, whom many believe are performing well now, may fall substantially short of newly adopted high standards. It is interesting to note that when Kentucky released the results of its new testing program, 90 percent of the students achieved below the "proficient" level. The message the state subsequently tried to deliver was that the system could not be fixed by "tinkering" with existing programs but that an overhaul of the entire system—as reflected in the Kentucky Education Reform Act—was necessary.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT EDUCATION REFORM IN A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The best tools of political and corporate communication must be used to help explain and win support for systemic reform. Polls and focus groups show public predilection to support the kind of reform that policymakers and educators are proposing. But first citizens must understand why reform is needed, what form it will take, what the timetable will be for accomplishing short- and long-term goals, how much it will cost, and what they can do to ensure its success.

Sophisticated communication tools can be used to promote systemic reform. A campaign to educate the public can benefit from the development of a clear message, listening to voters/customers and addressing their concerns, staying "on message," and using a variety of well timed media strategies to deliver the message. Unlike a political campaign, most education reform plans do not culminate in an election. Education reform must

be directed to drawing voters in for the long haul. That expectation must be clear. Public perceptions will not change overnight.

Research done for The Business Roundtable and Young & Rubicam for an Advertising Council campaign found that the public responds far better to a school reform message that is hopeful than one that is negative and frightening. Rather than promoting the idea that the standard of living will erode if students do not acquire higher skills, the better message, according to the focus group findings, is how much better the country would be if all U.S. students acquire these skills. The public also seems receptive to the notion of investment—spending for schools or young children upfront rather than for more costly remediation services later.

The best messages are those that are reinforced with successful examples, which a Governor or policymaker can use as evidence that proposed changes can work. It may be an inner-city classroom where the students are succeeding at high levels, or it may be a rural or suburban school where the students are using technology well. Voters and parents are skeptical. They want evidence that change can work. Although there are local exceptions, focus groups show that voters are not interested in putting additional tax dollars into the schools, at least not without a clear sense of exactly what they will get and who will be accountable for making it happen. In almost all cases, the most effective messengers are children. Educators are often the least effective because they are perceived as the problem or because they are thought to be motivated by personal gain.

FUNDAMENTAL OPPOSITION

There is growing opposition to the school reform movement from the religious fundamentalist community, particularly to "outcomes-based education." In public hearings, newsletters, and videos across the country, opponents are charging that states are trying to control the children, putting them all into a "dumbed-down," conformist mold.

In some places, state education departments have created problems by using documents that focus heavily on what may be considered "touchy-feely" issues—self-esteem, values, and peer pressure—rather than on academic standards and learning. Directing the debate toward emotional or behavioral issues can result in a loss of support from citizens who are already skeptical about the schools and particularly insistent that the basics come first.

As in any political campaign, the most effective way to respond to organized opposition is to have a strategy that anticipates what the opposition will say. This strategy must include a positive and proactive message for change that does not only assume a reactive posture to any group's attacks. There are many communicators who have experience in developing such strategies, including staff at the National Governors' Association, the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the National Alliance for Restructuring Education, The Business Roundtable, and the Communications Consortium. ECS has produced a particulary helpful communications kit, "Communicating About Restructuring," that addresses this issue.

GUBERNATORIAL LEADERSHIP

Restructuring a state education system and implementing a systemic reform agenda are long-term efforts that potentially can offer a Governor many allies—the business community, parents, teachers, and students—who are the ultimate stakeholders in the schools. Gubernatorial leadership is key to the success of systemic education reform. Governors can use their position to bring together various players to work as a coalition on issues that will result in greater public support for education reform. Coalitions for reform can produce a much louder, clearer voice for change and can help any Governor champion the education reform agenda.

Governors understand the need for clear communication. They typically have the communications apparatus in the state capital to raise public awareness of the need for change. Yet there is often a gap between the communications function and policy areas such as education. Governors should make sure that their staff in communications and policy meet regularly and have collaborative relationships.

This guide shows how Governors and states have worked on engaging the public in education reform. It focuses on important strategies to consider during the process of building public support for education reform. It highlights state strategies for communicating about progress toward achieving the National Education Goals and for promoting statewide systemic education reform. Four examples describe what was learned from recent education issue campaigns that were brought to the voters. The guide concludes with a discussion of a national campaign to increase public support for education improvement.

A cookie-cutter strategy for Governors and state policymakers to use to build public support for education reform does not exist. The uniqueness of each state, school district, and community makes it impossible and impractical to devise a formula that will magically enlist citizen support to change public education. Governors and their staffs have spent much of the last ten years determined to change and improve public education nationwide. Their efforts demonstrate how long it takes for institutional change to occur and for new ways of thinking and governing to emerge.

Change mandated from the state capital may technically move education reform forward, but for education to genuinely improve at the local level, the public must be involved in the process of reform from the outset. Grassroots support for education reform takes time and patience. An all-inclusive process to involve the different segments of the community in defining what new education policy means will help ensure acceptance of change and increase public support. Building a broad-based coalition of supporters for education improvement is useful for taking the message of reform to the various groups they represent in the community. Coalitions also can help provide the resources needed for communicating with the public about reform.

Engaging the public in education improvement requires disseminating information on proposed changes in a clear and understandable fashion. The public will need to read and see what change means. And, as the message for change ricochets throughout the community, local concerns will emerge that must be addressed honestly. However difficult this may be, this dialogue is essential and will enrich the process.

Governors should draw on the combined strengths of their policy and communications staffs to work collaboratively to engage the public and win support for education reform. When time constraints or gaps in expertise exist, outside professionals should be considered to poll public opinion, assist in developing a "plain-speak" message of reform, and help build grassroots constituencies for change. Additionally, plans for addressing the concerns of those opposing reform should be made at the beginning of any effort to build support for education reform.

In reviewing the successes and shortcomings of several states that have tried to build public support, a few workable guidelines emerge for Governors and their staffs to consider.

[redacted]

Plans to improve public education should begin with the facts. Public opinion polls and focus groups can help provide a baseline of information on what the public understands about the current public school system, what education reform could mean for students, and what the various fears associated with change may be.

Opinion surveys geared to assist policy formulation typically involve a fifteen- to twenty-minute in-person or telephone interview. Multiple-choice and open-ended questions enable respondents to voice their concerns about present systems, to comment on areas they support, and to identify misperceptions that exist about public education. This is in contrast to "yes-no" popularity polls on whether or not the public supports education reform.

Polls and focus group questions should be designed to get as much opinion data as is possible and affordable. Professional pollsters can help policymakers formulate questions to elicit information that will be useful during a campaign to engage the public in support of education improvement.

It is likely that the initial investment for opinion data will save money in both the short and long term. Polling information helps in the early planning phases of a campaign to build public support by helping target where communications resources should be focused. Public opinion polls help determine what level of information is understood, what misperceptions exist, and what types of improvements or changes interest citizens.

National and state polls have repeatedly illustrated the public's desire to return to the basics of education. At the same time, state policymakers are determined to improve and upgrade public education. Polling and focus groups can help identify the reasons for the disparity between a policymaker's understanding of why improvements need to take place and why the public appears to be resistant to change.

Governors often undertake their own fact-finding missions by conducting public forums to learn what people think about education reform. Although this strategy is useful because it involves policymakers interacting with their constituents, Governors should be careful not to use this as their only source of public opinion. Often only activists attend meetings with Governors. Although scientific opinion polling is not foolproof, it can provide a more accurate picture of public sentiment.

[redacted]

Building public support for a Governor's plan for education reform often gets placed on a back burner while traditional concerns—legislative approval and funding—preoccupy state policymakers. Bringing the public into the process as the plan is being developed requires a new way of thinking and governing.

Too often the public is told what the new policy is instead of being involved in developing or implementing the change. Those in the education community—parents, teachers, and administrators—and those in other sectors—business and community leaders—should be consulted to help map out the plans for changing education.

A collaborative approach to changing public education takes more time and effort. It involves developing a process for people to work together on solutions rather than in isolation. In several states, the public is directly involved in the operation of schools through school-site councils and site-based management. As people provide input and face the dilemmas associated with change, they have more knowledge on which to base their support and a clearer understanding of what is involved in change. A natural constituency develops as this process of getting people involved occurs.

Instead of focusing solely on winning legislative or ballot approval for education reform, Governors and state policymakers also should focus on working with the public to plan and implement change. Some ways to draw the public into the process of changing education include the following.

Local town meetings with the Governor, education commissioner, or other state policymakers, where changes are explained and time is provided for the public to react with comments and concerns.

Statewide television programs that allow time for public input through interactive programming. Citizens can assemble at local television stations and communicate with policymakers at the state capital through satellite hook-ups. This format enables Governors to share information with the public and it also provides state policymakers with feedback.

Printed materials distributed on a regular basis that keeps parents and the community informed of the changes underway. These can be sent home with students to save money, be included in daily newspapers as supplements, or mailed using resources provided by the private sector to parents and other interested parties.

As the process of developing education reform is underway at the local level, efforts to expand the base of support should be going on simultaneously. Those who believe in the need for change will be the best at selling or building support for change.

The traditional top-down approach where state government requires change is contrary to the way schools operate. Although state departments of education mandate policies for schools, the real work to implement them takes place in each school and school district. Therefore, the best place to build support for improved schools is at the local level. Why? Each of the traditional education constituencies—teachers, parents, and administrators—operate and are organized at a local level. These groups have much power in a local community. Most important, because they work daily in schools and in education systems nationwide, they are the true agents of change. Other more nontraditional education constituencies—businesses, seniors, and religious groups—are also organized at the local level. They are affected the most by what directly touches them. In this case, the students are their future workers and community members.

Some techniques for promoting grassroots support include the following.

Appeal to established advocacy organizations at the state and local levels to assist in reaching out to their constituencies to support education reform. Organizations have membership lists for mailings, regular meetings, and established credibility to use for expanding support for education reform.

Encourage the formation of a local organizing group to coordinate efforts to build support for education reform. A local committee with established connections in the community can:

- set up a speakers' bureau of local community leaders to address diverse organizations on reform;
- design a local media strategy that incorporates appearances on talk shows, columns in daily and weekly newspapers, and news events that draw attention to reform underway at the local level; and
- work with local employers to conduct sessions with their employees on the effects of improved education in the community.

Education is no longer perceived as a concern of only parents, teachers, and school administrators. The entire community is beginning to understand the importance of good education and its impact on a variety of social and economic outcomes.

Plans to build support for improved education should include building a broad-based coalition that represents the different elements of the community. Individuals and leaders from the various parts of a community—business, religious, human and social services, and seniors—are persuasive within their own groups for informing and mounting support for education reform.

Building a broad-based coalition of support requires time. The various parties in a coalition must voice their opinions on concerns and needs, and these concerns must be weighed by the community for the public to really be engaged in the process. If the coalition is a broad-based representation of the community, it is likely that the ideas and concepts that are acceptable to the coalition will be acceptable to the public. This wide-ranging support should provide a strong foundation for building the kind of support needed in a state for legislative passage or electoral approval.

States are forming coalitions of support in different ways. Vermont is able to wage a person-to-person effort because of its small size. Kentucky has localized its effort with community councils that draw in all segments of the community. Other states have relied on statewide organizations, usually located in

the state capital, to reach out to their local constituencies to build a core of support. These organizations frequently have communications networks to regularly inform their members of a Governor's policy efforts and explain why they should support them. The risk involved in using only this approach is that sometimes statewide organizations are unaware of concerns that are evolving at the local level.

[redacted]

Building public support requires financial resources. Most states have used private sector contributions to pay for information gathering and the massive task of keeping the public informed. The use of state funds to build support for education reform can be seen as using state tax dollars to convince the people to support a government policy. This potential conflict has steered most Governors to broad-based private sector coalitions for financial support.

It is difficult to estimate how much is needed to undertake the various efforts to increase support for improving public education. The size of the state, the number of large population areas, media markets, organized opposition, and the length of time required to mount support are a few of the factors affecting the cost. In reviewing the resources used in several of the states involved in statewide reform efforts, it is safe to estimate that at least $150,000 per year is needed to support these efforts.

States use these resources for staff and travel; purchasing media time on radio and television and space in newspapers; designing and printing publications; and producing video presentations or satellite transmissions. Communication costs money whether it is done in person, in print, or through technology. It is the power of communicating information that aids the process of engaging the people to support improved public education systems.

The easiest way to draw resources into an effort to improve schools is to prepare data that show the benefits of better education. Businesses operate successfully by keeping focused on the bottom line. Data that show what a trained workforce and educated consumers could mean for local business and industry will be effective in gaining their support. Information detailing the costs of education to a community in contrast to the costs when a student drops out, enters the cycle of crime, or becomes dependent on society is also an effective way to seek the support of the business community.

[redacted]

Never before have state policymakers worked on a ten-year plan for massive change to public education. Because of the nature of their jobs, Governors often feel an urgency from voters to deliver policy change within the limits of their terms. Consequently, few have faced the need to sustain public attention on an agenda that extends beyond their term of office.

Education reform efforts underway around the country indicate that the public needs time to understand and act on proposed change. Herein lies the challenge. Governors need to be able to show progress, and the public needs the time to accept the changes.

The dilemma requires reality-based timetables for achieving progress. Governors can use different methods of accountability to help demonstrate progress to the public. Creating accountability benchmarks will help demonstrate positive movement on reform. Many Governors are using benchmarks that are understandable and provide easy methods for checking progress. For example, school readiness can be benchmarked by reporting on the increased number of children being immunized. Although 100 percent of all children may not be immunized in a four-year term, the public has reason to believe that reform is progressing if the benchmark shows positive movement.

To sustain attention on a Governor's reform agenda, some states have created independent organizations that exist beyond elected officials' usual terms of office. These groups can be composed of parents, educators, the business community, policymakers, and the public. They can conduct media campaigns, track progress, and keep the public informed and engaged over time.

Among the strategies to consider for sustaining public support is the development of **a comprehensive communications plan for education reform**. The plan needs to be based on research that identifies the needs and beliefs of various audiences and groups. The communications plan needs to have both a general public awareness strategy and then specific strategies for targeted audiences. The plan should include timelines and specific measures of success. In addition, the plan should include the following.

A public information campaign that includes a simple, repetitious message or theme presented in a graphically consistent way on all coordinated materials. Advertisements in newspapers and on radio and television help keep the public's attention on reform. These efforts are costly, but the effectiveness of carefully timed advertising makes this an important strategy.

A planned media strategy that includes visibility on the reform effort at least once a month. Editorials, events that warrant coverage, television talk-show appearances, and regular radio public service announcements are but a few of the techniques for remaining in the "public eye" over the long term.

[redacted]

Too often policymakers and leaders in education and government unintentionally baffle or alienate the public with education jargon. Policymakers need to make an extra effort to speak and write in everyday language about education change. It is important to simplify the language, explain the terms, and help people understand the new and important directions being taken in systemic education reform.

Being able to see evidence of the changes underway in public school systems also helps engage the public. New relationships should be considered between schools and the community in order to witness these changes. In an open environment parents can be reassured that reform is beneficial to their children's education. It can be counterproductive to have a community-based coalition for reform and not allow the community to view the change. Treating citizens as valued customers and inviting them to see what restructuring means will benefit students, teachers, the school, and the statewide reform effort.

Among the techniques that enable the community to see changes underway are:

- student portfolios that document accomplishments and progress;
- community open houses where business people and parents can come into the schools to understand reform;
- videotapes documenting change for presentation to community groups; and
- regular parent-teacher meetings and open doors to parents and community members interested in visiting the school or in helping out.

Building public support for education policy change relies upon the joint talents of education policy staff and communications staff inside a Governor's office. Each staff person possesses skills that are needed to build and sustain a campaign for public support.

Education policy staff can provide:

- substantive information on education practices in the state;
- an understanding of national and state education goals;
- knowledge on the needs of the public education system;
- links to the education community—teachers, administrators, parents, and their statewide organizations; and
- experience and resources for information needed in a public support effort.

Communications staff can provide:

- an understanding of the free and paid media opportunities that are effective in their state;
- experience in message design and in what messages work with the public;
- connections to the media executives who help influence public opinion; and
- relationships with media in the state capital and often around the state.

Mutual cooperation between the two staffs will greatly aid efforts to capture public support. The information age requires education reform to be boiled down to terms and methods that the public can understand. Communicators also must be able to talk intelligently about policy change, and this knowledge often can be provided best by a policy person who understands the intricacies of the issue.

Outside consultants have been used in some states to help build public support. These professionals are usually hired to augment staff expertise or to assist at times when staff is not available to take on extra work. Consultants in message design, polling, and political consulting can apply their knowledge to the public support challenge facing Governors by filling in the gaps that might exist with staff.

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A successful strategy for building public support for education change should include plans from the beginning to expect the unexpected—organized opposition to public school reform. Those involved in improving public education, from the Governor to citizens, sometimes get so close to the need for improvement that they forget that the current school system has a cadre of support from parents who see it working for their children.

Additionally, the public mood affects the unexpected. The anti-tax sentiment that many citizens currently are expressing can be a barrier to many reform efforts. In addition, some groups also challenge education reform efforts for what is perceived to be a lack of consistency with the values they may espouse. For instance, some religious groups have protested teaching students "critical thinking" skills by interpreting this to mean teaching children to criticize and not obey. In another instance, religious groups opposed providing extra help for at-risk students because they believed resources were being diverted from children whose families have prepared them to learn to children whose families have failed to perform this duty.

Strategies for dealing with opposition incorporate many of the same elements suggested for accomplishing successful reform. In the April 1992 edition of *The School Administrator*, published

by the American Association of School Administrators, Bill Graves suggested the following strategies for working with groups opposed to school reform.

Be informed about the materials, practices, and programs being used in school districts. Understand the rationale for their use. Use information as the best defense.

Listen and give critics a fair hearing. Treat their concerns with respect and sensitivity.

Involve the members of the broad-based coalition. Their leadership and stature in the community will help counter uninformed opposition. Their involvement often can help develop compromises with those who may oppose reform.

Do not panic because an individual or a group has decided to oppose parts or all of a reform effort. Remember the first goal is to improve education for all students. Everyone will not agree on every aspect of reform. Often negative feedback can improve a policy.

Be forthright with those opposing reform. Work with them to identify what practice offends them.

Because those who oppose use the media to aid their concerns, **have a media spokesperson with a strategy in place.** This person must be accessible and knowledgeable on reform and the opposition's charges.

On policy change as significant as education reform, there will always be people who disagree with the plan. Time and trouble can be lessened by working with the public early and often.

Since 1990, when the nation's Governors adopted the six National Education Goals for improving education in America, states have responded with multifaceted actions. At that time the Governors established a national report through the National Education Goals Panel and annual reports from the states to assist in keeping track of progress toward reaching the goals. The reporting process is a way to engage the public in statewide education reform efforts and to help the public understand state action toward achieving the goals. Those staff and elected officials involved in education reform have reached out to the public in this process to discuss changes and improvements underway in the schools. By building these connections, more people have access to information on the National Educational Goals.

The reports and activities of several states have been examined to discover what the states are doing to engage citizens in efforts to achieve the goals by the year 2000.

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT 7

STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER 15

The National Education Goals for the Year 2000

Goal 1	All children in America will start school ready to learn.
Goal 2	The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
Goal 3	American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
Goal 4	U.S. students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.
Goal 5	Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
Goal 6	Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE 25

STATE CONTACTS/ ADVISORY GROUP 61

Ohio Governor George V. Voinovich made public involvement a vital part of his solution for improving Ohio's public education system. In 1992 the Governor issued Ohio's second progress report, *Expanding Opportunities for Success*, to provide a starting point for identifying what actions are needed to move the state's education system forward. The plan was developed as a collaborative effort of five state agencies, as well as representatives of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, two foundations, and the Governor's Education Management (GEM) Council. *Expanding Opportunities for Success* documented the initial baseline information for measuring Ohio's progress and identified specific strategies to meet the goals.

Governor Voinovich's action plan focused on making information on education more accessible to the public. The Governor reported directly to the people on the challenges in education and outlined specific actions individual Ohioans can take to become part of the reform effort. His reporting process clearly established the diversity of needs, costs, and changes required for improvement. Citizens received benchmarks to judge performance and were able to understand their role as a critical part of the success of education reform.

At the same time, other efforts were underway to document education progress in Ohio. Governor Voinovich initiated the "Gap Analysis" to seek public input on the gaps that exist between Ohio's current education system and what needs to be done to reach the National Education Goals. Teams of interviewers toured the state seeking public input on where the gaps existed and what could be done to improve educational services.

[redacted]

To reach out more directly to even more Ohio citizens, Governor Voinovich supported the development of the *Report to the Citizens of Ohio*. This five-page document outlines Ohio's progress on the six National Education Goals. The report uses simple, straightforward language. One section is simply called "What Can I Do?"

Too often, government and other professional sectors fail to communicate in an understandable manner to those outside their own professions. Ohio's report is designed for the lay person. The photographs appeal to a cross-section of individuals, and the copy is written in everyday language and avoids education jargon.

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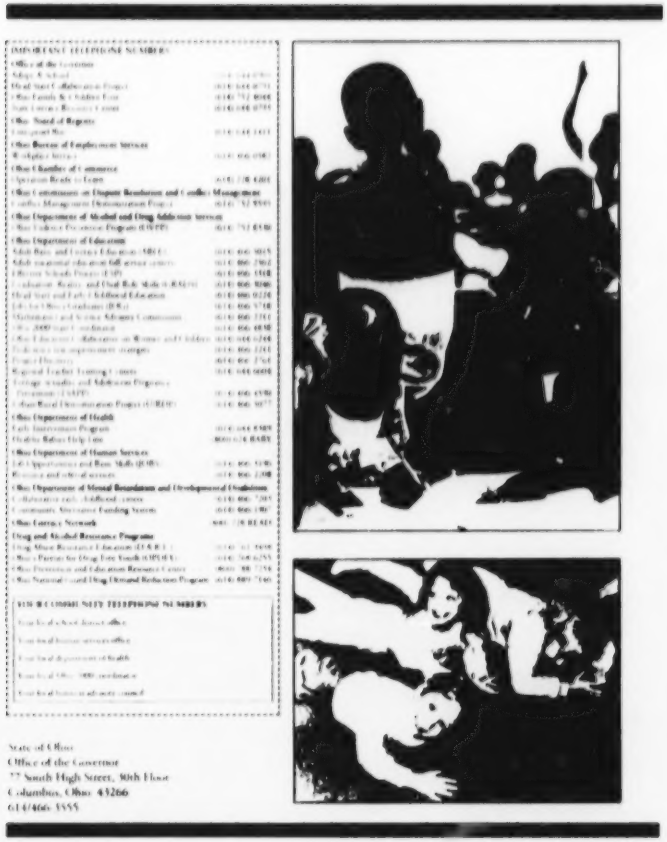
A Report to the Citizens of Ohio **includes a "Call for Action" that provides a cut-out chart of telephone numbers and program names for the public to use to get more detailed information on educational services. Designed to encourage use, the telephone listing provides easy access to state employees assigned to work on such programs as teenage pregnancy prevention, the Ohio 2000 initiative, and Project Discovery.**



IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Office of the Governor

Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE)

Ohio Board of Regents

Ohio Bureau of Employment Services

Ohio Chamber of Commerce

Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management

Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services

Ohio Department of Education

Ohio Department of Health

Ohio Department of Human Services

Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

Ohio Family Network

Drug and Alcohol Resource Programs

YOUR COMMUNITY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

State of Ohio
Office of the Governor
77 South High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43266
614/466-3555

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Governor Voinovich's *Report to the People of Ohio* offers specific ways for the public to get involved in education and in their local schools. Action steps are suggested for families, businesses, communities, and schools, providing ideas for individuals or groups to use to help improve education and the schools in their neighborhoods. This unique approach offers alternatives for citizens who might not know how to get involved on their own.

For instance, parents are urged to "visit your child's science and mathematics classrooms and talk to teachers in order to become more knowledgeable about changes occurring in these subject areas." This specific task addresses National Education Goal 4, which challenges the education system to have U.S. students be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement by the year 2000.

The Governor's efforts also are directed to getting businesses in the state involved in schools and school improvement. For example, the Governor's plan suggests that businesses can help meet the goal of school readiness by supporting child care services in their communities. The plan recommends that local businesses "develop employee leave policies that support parental participation in early childhood programs, health care, and other school activities." This approach enables businesses to get a firsthand look at the child care needs of their community.

The simplicity of these approaches is what makes them effective. An effort to engage the public in education reform must offer alternatives that appeal to a cross-section of people. The tasks for some people must be simple and accessible. Not everyone is an activist, willing to donate a large amount of time to education improvement. However, the ability to engage the public on a variety of levels is important to the overall reform effort and to building broad-based support.

Ohio's plan to reach the National Education Goals also includes benchmarks for measuring progress over the ten-year period from 1990 to 2000. Benchmarks, as reference points, help facilitate public involvement in education reform because they clearly communicate the starting point, what is needed for improvement, the progress being made, and what achievements are needed to be successful in accomplishing the goals.

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Benchmarks help communicate progress to the public. Ohio's report uses simple bar graphs to demonstrate progress on achieving most of the benchmarks for each national goal. Graphically, they help explain what is needed to the public. Using benchmarks in education to measure success helps account for progress and makes the system and its goals more understandable to the public.

Goal 3: *By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.*

Goal 3 Benchmark

Percent of students passing all sections of the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests after two attempts

Goal 4: *By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.*

Goal 4 Benchmark

Percent of students passing the mathematics portion of the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests after two attempts

In addition to the second annual report on progress toward the National Education Goals, two statewide education summits were held to focus on education improvement. It was during the first summit that a study began to identify where gaps exist between the state's education system and what needed to be done to meet the national goals. The project—the Gap Analysis—incorporated public comments and ideas into the final recommendations. A team was formed to conduct interviews in communities around the state in order to obtain suggestions and ideas for obtaining better results in education. All local school superintendents were sent copies of the interview form. In addition, 17,000 local school board members, legislators, and educators received the questionnaire through the state board of education's newsletter.

The findings of the Gap Analysis have been organized into four main themes: performance-based education, change, family support and advocacy, and lifelong learning. In each issue area, the Gap Analysis clearly defines the gaps that exist and what must be done to confront them.

Seeking public input and explaining what exists through an exercise such as the Gap Analysis is beneficial to gaining public support for better education in Ohio. The communication process builds public knowledge of the problems facing the state. Seeking solutions enables the public to buy into the reform process. Interacting with the public also reinforces the Governor's reform agenda and provides citizens with insight into the challenges facing state government in education reform.

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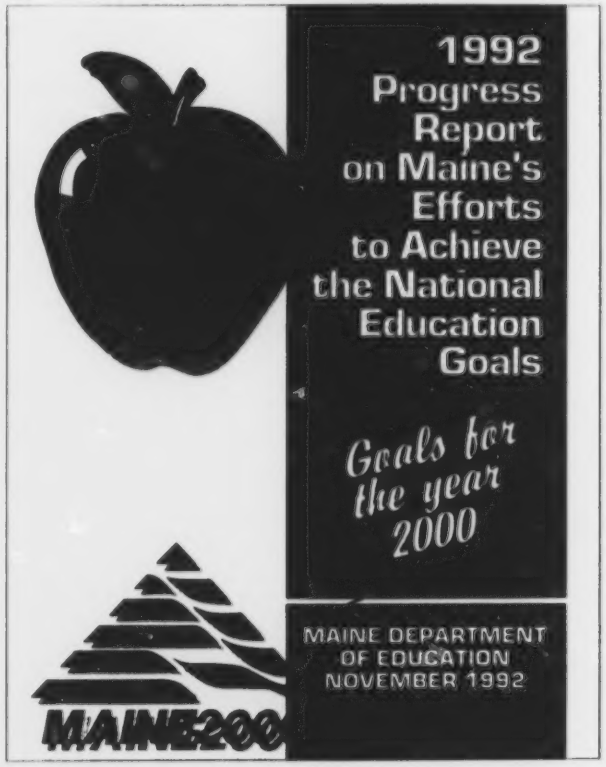
Maine Governor John R. McKernan Jr. determined at the outset of the state's effort to reach the National Education Goals by the year 2000 that the involvement and support of the public was vital to its success. The state devised new ways to communicate to the public to keep them informed and draw them into the process. Maine distributed its annual report on progress to achieve the national goals to a large audience. The Governor's communication efforts also included a customized reporting effort that gave citizens information on progress at the local, state, and national levels in one document.

[illegible]

To meet the Governor's goal of keeping the public informed on the progress of improving education in the state, the department of education prepared its 1992 report on progress toward the national goals for a large audience. One version of the report was distributed throughout the education community. A second version, which was designed to communicate in simple language, was prepared in newspaper tabloid form. The progress report was inserted in the Sunday/weekend editions of the state's three daily newspapers. This technique enabled more than 300,000 households in the state to have access to information on the needs and goals of public education in Maine. The wide distribution of the *1992 Progress Report* was financed by Maine's private sector.

Governor McKernan's report communicated plainly. It was not a policy document only for those in the field of education. It was written like a newspaper feature story with understandable wording, appealing photographs, and illustrations. With the wide circulation, Governor McKernan's intent is to make the broad national and state goals known in "every community, every school district . . . to make them local goals as well." The Governor hoped that the National Education Goals would serve as a roadmap for improving the state's schools by eliciting local input.



The Governor's effort to report progress on meeting the National Education Goals also includes an annual report card for citizens. Maine's report card is designed to provide its citizens with information about the performance of local schools and about the accomplishments, goals, and plans for continued school improvement. This communications strategy helps inform the public that education is directly applicable to the individual citizen. It also provides a basis for comparing local school progress with information on state and national performance.

Although many states have incorporated report cards in their efforts to meet the national goals, Maine's report includes customized local information describing the progress of county schools compared with all other state schools and national education statistics.

The expanded report card also explains specifically how Maine's progress relates to the six National Education Goals. A yearly update informs the public of tangible progress toward meeting the goals. For example, in meeting Goal 5, which calls for every adult to be literate by the year 2000, Maine shows in its 1990-91 report card how local and state literacy projects are working with forty-five businesses to assist parents in developing ways to help their children become better learners.

REPORTING ON NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SUPPORT OF REFORM

The annual reporting process of state progress toward achieving the National Education Goals has focused on improving public support of education reform. In reporting progress toward the National Education Goals, states can do the following.

- **Offer specific suggestions on ways the public can get involved in education reform.**
- **Highlight programs that are working in the local communities.**
- **Inform the public on the challenges facing the state**
- **Communicate in common language to a wide audience.**
- **Design reports in an attractive and engaging style.**
- **Customize information on school progress by giving communities data on their local schools.**
- **Make information on education improvement accessible.**
- **Use benchmarks to provide accountability to the public on progress.**

MINNESOTA

Minnesota Governor Arne H. Carlson has included his plans for improving public education into a blueprint for change—*Minnesota Milestones*.

The Governor began this project in 1991 based on the concept of defining a shared vision of the state's diverse needs, setting goals for improvement, and measuring progress for results.

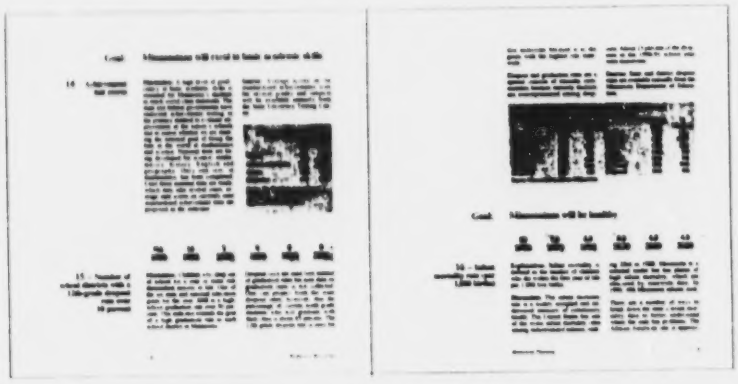
Governor Carlson consulted with more than 10,000 Minnesotans to get their input on what the state needed to do to ensure a better future for its people.

The Governor felt that historically government had done a poor job of measuring results—of being accountable to the taxpayer. He therefore based his system on measuring and monitoring improvement. Governor Carlson began the first milestones report card to serve as an early warning system to alert the public when policies and programs are not working.

Twenty goals are enumerated in *Minnesota Milestones*. Woven throughout are goals that will contribute to the improvement of the state's public school system. For instance, the plan sets forth goals such as:

- **our children will not live in poverty;**
- **families will provide a stable environment for their children; and**
- **all children will come to school ready to learn.**

Making education improvement part of an overall master plan to improve the way of life for Minnesotans is an important aspect of engaging the support of the public. The unified vision provides the public with a clear understanding of the Governor's comprehensive agenda to improve the quality of life for all Minnesotans.



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TENNESSEE

Tennessee Governor Ned McWherter's 21st Century Schools Project includes an important element to activate public involvement in school improvement. By taking the mystery out of technical data and enabling the public to see how improvements are being made in the public school system, Tennessee has made great strides in engaging the public in education reform.

The Governor's project uses a new assessment method to build public support for education improvement. Tennessee is using a value-added assessment to give local citizens the information they need to ask informed questions about public education and to get more involved in their local public schools. The results of the value-added assessment are sent each October to the local media, political and business leaders, and local education organizations.

Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System shows the public how much the state's students are learning from year to year. This system is different from most accountability measurements that show which school systems have the highest test scores or how the state compares with another state. The public can see the actual academic gains students make in math, reading, language arts, social studies, and science in grades three through eight.

Governor McWherter included the new assessment system as an accountability mechanism in his 21st Century Schools education improvement program. The Governor believes that information provided in annual accountability reports will motivate parents, teachers, and administrators to become more aggressive in addressing what needs to be done to improve their schools.

Tennessee's efforts to generate more public participation in school improvement also include a requirement that local school board budgets be published in detail in the local media prior to the beginning of the school year. This broke new ground in Tennessee in 1992-93. In return for providing parents and community members with a clearer understanding of how funds are spent, local school boards now have total discretion to appropriate state education funds. Priorities shifted in dozens of school systems after parents and community members, equipped for the first time with practical knowledge of the school budget, participated more fully in school board meetings.

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States around the country are starting to implement systemic reform initiatives. Key components of these initiatives are efforts to build support by engaging and involving citizens in the reforms as they evolve. The following two examples highlight important communication techniques and methods involved in engaging public support for systemic change.

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Changing Kentucky's public education system has taken more than a decade of intensive work. The public and private sectors in the state worked collaboratively to build support for education reform. After more than ten years of effort, a groundswell of public support helped ensure passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990.

KERA remains the most comprehensive systemic education reform legislation in the nation. The state's education system was virtually rebuilt with a substantial increase in education funding, beginning the process of equalizing spending between the richest and poorest districts. School-based decisionmaking, a student performance assessment system, preschool and extended school services, family resource and youth services centers, and an ungraded primary school program replacing grades kindergarten through three are just some of the key provisions in the reform law.

Since the movement to improve public education in Kentucky began in 1980, many successful methods have been used to engage Kentuckians in support of reform. The techniques focused on active involvement of the public as the method to build support and understanding for reform. It is important to note that the Governor's office provided continuity in its support for KERA despite the changes in administration due to the state's one-term limit on the governorship.

The nonpartisan, independent Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence was the focal point for building public support in the state. The Prichard Committee organized the private sector and used financial resources over the long term to help keep the public engaged in changes underway.

The Prichard Committee was also successful in engaging the public at the community level. By organizing Kentuckians at the local school level, the public not only was able to persuade legislators to vote for reform, but to become involved in the changes as they took place by monitoring their success.

BUILDING GRASSROOTS SUPPORT AND SUSTAINING IT OVER TIME

Building support and engaging the citizens of Kentucky in public school reform began in 1980 through the efforts of an independent committee that was focusing on improving higher education. This group of prominent citizens, led by Edward F. Prichard Jr., was known initially as the "Committee on Higher Education in Kentucky's Future," later becoming The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. After writing guidelines for improving the state college and university system and receiving no support in the 1982 legislative session for those ideas, the Prichard Committee decided that "effective educational improvement cannot take place in higher education alone or in elementary and secondary education alone. All levels of education must be improved."

Using a working paper titled "What Must Be Done," the Prichard Committee organized a massive statewide town forum in 1984, with simultaneous sessions in every one of the 178 school districts. Some 20,000 Kentuckians attended, making it evident that the education reform movement had more momentum than had been perceived. More than $300,000 in free newspaper advertising was donated to promote participation in the town forum.

The citizens attending declared that they wanted high-quality academic programs that promoted mastery of fundamental skills—reading, writing, and mathematics. They also wanted students to receive more individual attention, teachers to receive higher pay, less favoritism and "politicking" in the schools, closer relationships between parents and schools, and more money for schools.

After this initial organizing event to rally public support, the Prichard Committee realized that to be truly successful, school reform in Kentucky would require building a grassroots movement to pressure public officials and legislators. During the next six years, the Prichard Committee undertook many efforts to engage the public and build support for education reform and adequate spending for schools. The examples that follow are a few of the techniques used to build public support.

The Prichard Committee launched a series of Citizen Action Workshops, which offered instruction in practical techniques for organizing and leading citizens groups that would work for improved schools. Those attending began to constitute an increasingly knowledgeable and effective statewide force for change. Along with learning how to set goals and conduct meetings, the participants were informed on how to build better public relations, recruit allies, and build relationships.

By 1989, the year prior to the legislative session in which KERA was enacted, the Prichard Committee had determined that the needs of the state's school system had been thoroughly analyzed in reports and that the public was ready for change. However, when reviewing the past three legislative sessions where only partial strides toward education reform were achieved, the Prichard Committee decided to rally another visible means of public pressure. In a statewide television town forum, citizens from across the state offered ideas for school reform, and in doing so dramatized the level of support for reform for the public and legislators alike. Connecting eighty-four sites in the state, the broadcast cost $75,000 for production and satellite time. This teleconference also launched another citizen action effort—the Prichard Alliance—to provide support and assistance for a core of involved citizens in every school district. Some 500 citizens joined the Prichard Alliance and began attending local school board meetings.

While the Prichard Committee continued its efforts, the Kentucky Supreme Court made a major decision involving education in the state. The court declared the state's entire system of common schools to be unconstitutional. It directed the Kentucky General Assembly to recreate a "substantially uniform" system of schools that provides each child with an equal opportunity to receive an adequate education. This

led to the enactment of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 and the transformation of Kentucky's education system.

Since the passage of the reform law, the Prichard Committee has changed direction and is building public support for implementing KERA. For instance, it has organized citizens and business people into fifty-five community committees, covering eighty-five school districts, that encourage and monitor local implementation of the law.

The Prichard Committee currently is coordinating another noteworthy project in collaboration with the Kentucky Radio News Network. One-minute news stories, titled "Today in Education," are produced weekly to help keep the public informed and engaged in the variety of restructuring activities in progress. For instance, when new testing or assessments are underway, the radio updates inform listeners of the change taking place in the classrooms. Because more than half of the states in the nation have some form of state radio news network, this communications effort is a feasible way to help build public support in other states.

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The Partnership for Kentucky School Reform is composed of more than fifty public and private leaders representing the state's business, civic, government, and education organizations that have made a commitment to the successful implementation of KERA for the next ten years. The Partnership was created to build business support for implementing the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Although the law has been enacted, the task of keeping the public engaged and involved remains key to the success of improving the state's education system.

The Partnership is funded by the members of the national Business Roundtable from Kentucky—Ashland Oil, Inc., United Parcel Service, Inc., and Humana, Inc.—and is managed by the Prichard Committee. It is seeking to create the connection between education reform and the future of the state in terms of employment and productivity, with lower subsequent costs for welfare, health care, and other social support programs.

The Partnership uses a variety of traditional and creative communication techniques to reach large and small business owners and their employees around the state. Paid advertisements in newspapers and on radio and television are the most effective way to reach the public. Another successful tool is the Partnership's speakers' bureau. Well organized and promoted, this effort is unique because its speakers include national, regional, and statewide leaders from both the public

and private sectors. For example, James M. Wiseman, the public affairs general manager of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, is available to speak on "Business and Education Reform: An Investment in Your Future." In the first year of operation, the speakers' bureau scheduled presentations in forty-seven counties to groups such as local chambers of commerce, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, religious groups, and retired citizens groups.

The Partnership also developed a traveling exhibit housed in a school bus bearing a sign that says "GET ABOARD FOR EDUCATION REFORM." The bus, which is sponsored by United Parcel Service at no expense to state taxpayers, uses innovative exhibits to explain the components of KERA to adults and children. The bus visited ninety-seven locations in fifty-eight counties in its first year of operation. Approximately 250,000 citizens toured the exhibit during the first year.

Both the speakers' bureau and the traveling bus exhibit are effective methods for communicating and activating public support in rural populations. The approach of bringing the message to the people not only makes information more accessible, but it gives state school administrators and elected officials feedback from local communities.

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IN KENTUCKY, PEOPLE WITHOUT CHILDREN IN SCHOOL MAKE EDUCATION THEIR BUSINESS.

We all need to invest time and energy in our future. That's why people who don't have children in school are taking time to help Kentucky youngsters who will follow them into the workplace. They know that the only way to build Kentucky's work force is to provide a quality education for today's school children. And they want to help.

Make a commitment to education reform and Kentucky's children. Your future depends on it. Find out how **YOU** can help.

EDUCATION REFORM . . . MAKE IT *YOUR* BUSINESS!

The Partnership for Kentucky School Reform ♦ 1-800-928-2111

With the help of focus groups and polling, the Partnership developed paid print advertisements and brochures to help educate the state's workforce on KERA. One newspaper tabloid handout provides a primer on Kentucky education reform.

Nine Good Reasons to Support Kentucky's School Reforms

1. What students learn is most important.
2. The community schools get a different "boss."
3. We ask more of teachers.
4. We give the kids who need it a better chance at success.
5. Primary schools give children a successful start.
6. A little extra care goes a long way with kids.
7. We'll be using the latest technology to keep in touch.
8. A lot has changed about who's in charge.
9. We're spending our money more wisely than ever.

This newspaper insert offers a clear and concise description of changes underway in the state's schools. It also uses repetition to place emphasis on the important aspects of reform. Note that in the "reasons" cited, numbers two and eight communicate the same message. The concept of who is the boss and who is in charge is a critical one in terms of building public support. In this instance, informing the public that it has more of a say under KERA will help engage the public in the process.

The partnership effort by the business sector continues in Kentucky, and each corporate member is encouraged to expand public outreach efforts to suit their style and needs. Ashland Oil conducted a paycheck stuffer campaign to gauge employee participation in education reform and communicate the messages of the change underway in state schools. The first paycheck insert provided an overview of KERA and a questionnaire on employee activity. The response was positive, showing a high level of employee participation in their local schools.

Although Kentucky's education reform efforts benefit from corporate support, the private sector also has gained from its community exposure. Each time corporate leaders are publicly connected to the Prichard Committee, KERA, the Governor, or state legislators on education reform, they gain public recognition. The business sector is perceived to be supportive of programs that help the state's children. This type of "win-win" situation, when both sides benefit from involvement in communications activities, helps the reform effort through added resources available from the private sector and increased public relations for business.

[redacted]

The Prichard Committee and the reform legislation (KERA) established structures to make it easier for the public to get involved in the massive change underway in Kentucky's school system. By formalizing local participation, these efforts established and maintained public involvement and subsequent support at the level where change was occurring.

KERA mandates school-based decisionmaking through school councils. This process makes each local school the place where most of the policies and plans for schooling occurs. This form of decisionmaking gives teachers, principals, and parents in local schools the authority to determine the direction for their school.

Each council has six people: the principal as chairperson, three teachers (elected by the teachers in each school), and two parents (elected by parents of children in the school). The councils make decisions on curriculum; instructional materials; assignments of students, teachers, and space; classroom practices; and extracurricular programs. The KERA school councils encourage more parents to get involved by asking them to serve on auxiliary committees and coordinate local activities to improve their schools.

The Prichard Committee organized Community Committees for Education to extend the main committee's reach throughout the state. These committees were established in every community to monitor reform activities, provide a means for local citizens to check on the progress of reform, and to promote participation in school-based decisionmaking.

This form of extensive community involvement improved and increased public support for the statewide reform law. As KERA, the Prichard Committee, and the private sector each created local structures for involvement, the level of understanding and support for improving Kentucky's public education system continued to grow around the state.

Vermont's approach to solidifying public support for comprehensive change to its public education system incorporates both innovative and basic communication techniques.

The state's efforts to enlist public support focus on the use of plain language, dispelling the myths about changing education, and including the public early in the process of reform. Vermont's education reform initiative, called "The Green Mountain Challenge," sought to engage the public early in the process. Through local meetings and publications, the department of education enlisted the help of the public and continues to work diligently at keeping citizens engaged as the initiative progresses. The state's education reform plan is always presented to the public in plain language, resisting the temptation to use policy jargon. The state also had the foresight to lay out a short- and long-term plan for change. This enabled the public to view education reform as a planned process with benchmarks for accountability. Vermont addressed the misconceptions that many have about restructuring by opening the doors to schools and letting the public "see" reform underway. The state also used video technology to show the community the benefits of restructuring.

[redacted]

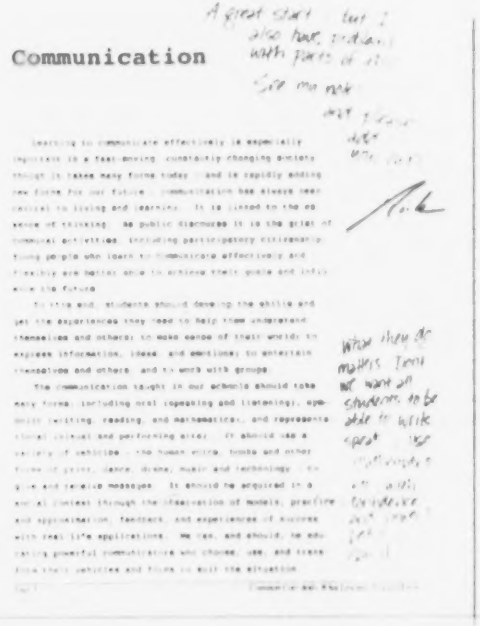
Reaching out to citizens to include them and their ideas in the way government provides a service such as education is a departure from the norm, but it is a practice that is becoming increasingly important. As distrust in government has steadily increased over the years, policymakers realize how important it is to be open to citizen input.

In the initial planning stages, the state's commissioner of education and department of education staff went to the people to design the core of education reform by asking the citizens to define "what every student in the state should know and be able to do."

More than fifty forums were held in communities around the state to define the basic plan for change. These meetings involved 4,000 Vermonters in charting the future of public education. After these discussions, a basic common core of learning was drafted that defined the new curriculum focus.

People attending the meetings, as well as other interested citizens, were aggressively sought out and mailed a draft of what was discussed. This process enabled the public to provide additional input and advice after the public meetings. The goal of expanding the base of citizens who know about and get involved with the reform effort continues to be a primary objective of the state department of education.

Throughout the reform process, considerable attention also is being given to communicating in plain and understandable language. Evidence of the style developed in Vermont that is truly "user-friendly" is found in the first report, *The Vermont Common Core of Learning: Is This Really What Learners Need to Know*, which summarizes the new state curriculum focus. The report was prepared in an innovative visual way using the handwritten comments and questions of Vermont Education Commissioner Rick Mills to encourage public response.



Communication

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The report also describes the direction of the new curriculum in understandable terms. Curriculum guidelines for local districts are defined in five areas in concise, understandable language that enables the public to relate to the words and therefore to the process.

Communication is described in the report as students being able to "develop the skills and get the experiences they need to help them understand themselves and others; to make sense of their world; to express information, ideas, and emotions; to entertain themselves and others; and to work with groups." Problemsolving is explained as students being able to "learn to be critical of the information available to them. They learn—and they should learn—to recognize bias, separate fact from propaganda, and identify manipulation in the media. They develop a healthy skepticism, along with the objectivity and open-mindedness that are great assets to adults, as we contend with complex problems that have no single, definitive solution."

Another report, *A Green Mountain Challenge: Very High Skills for Every Student: No Exceptions, No Excuses*, used the same approach. In describing the challenge facing the people of Vermont, the education commissioner states: "Here is the heart of the matter: Tell students what we expect, and listen to them, too—most of them really want greater challenges than we offer them now. Measure results and talk sensibly about them—the truth is that we are not yet close to the results we are capable of."

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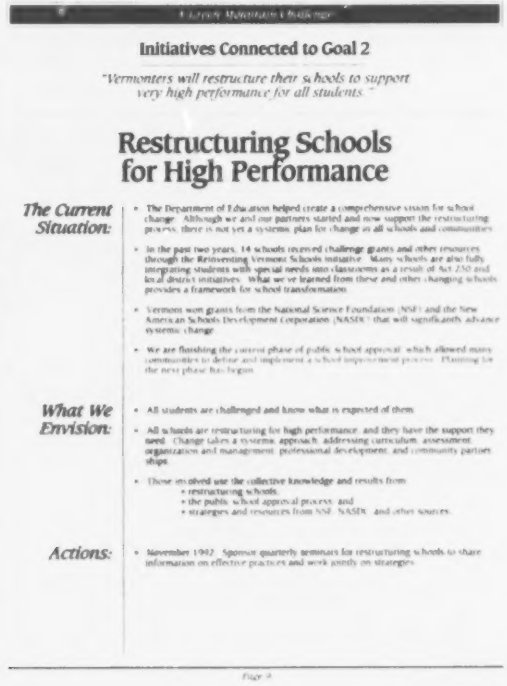
A Green Mountain Challenge: Very High Skills for Every Student: No Exceptions, No Excuses also details for the public what needs to be done in the months and years ahead for successful change. The report uses four overriding state education goals and defines what needs to be done in outline form, using a communications style that invites the public to participate. Subheads like "The Current Situation," "What We Envision," and "Actions" are used to help outline what needs to be done. Then a month-by-month calendar outlines the responsibilities of all the parties involved in the state's reform effort.

For example, to address Goal 2, the report lists eight specific, scheduled "actions" that state government will need to take to help achieve the goal of "restructuring schools to support very high performance for all students."

Using a calendar that discloses tasks with dates for completion gives the public a complete picture of the plan for change. This approach also provides a built-in accountability system for those in elected office.



Initiatives Connected to Goal 2

"Vermonters will restructure their schools to support very high performance for all students."

Restructuring Schools for High Performance

The Current Situation:

- The Department of Education helped create a comprehensive vision for school change. Although we and our partners started and now support the restructuring process, there is not yet a systems plan for change in all schools and communities.
- In the past two years, 14 schools received challenge grants and other resources through the Reinventing Vermont Schools initiative. Many schools are also fully integrating students with special needs into classrooms as a result of Act 230 and local district initiatives. What we've learned from these and other changing schools provides a framework for school transformation.
- Vermont won grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) that will significantly advance systemic change.
- We are finishing the current phase of public school approval, which allowed many communities to define and implement a school improvement process. Planning for the next phase has begun.

What We Envision:

- All students are challenged and know what is expected of them.
- All schools are restructuring for high performance, and they have the support they need. Change takes a systems approach, addressing curriculum, assessment, organization and management, professional development, and community partnerships.
- Those involved use the collective knowledge and results from:
  - restructuring schools,
  - the public school approval process, and
  - strategies and resources from NSF, NASDC, and other sources.

Actions:

- November 1992: Sponsor quarterly seminars for restructuring schools to share information on effective practices and work jointly on strategies.

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Month-by-Month Calendar

October 1992

Education and Human Services: Working Together to Better Serve Children and Families. Integrate joint budget planning process between the Department of Education and the Agency of Human Services.

November 1992

Assessment: Begin professional development for 6th and 8th grade teachers and for high school pilot teachers to ensure consistent application of assessment criteria.

Restructuring Schools for High Performance: Sponsor quarterly seminars for restructuring schools to share information on effective practices and work jointly on strategies.

December 1992

Common Core of Learning: Distribute Draft 2 of: What Learners Need to Know to all schools, arrange discussion and response.

Restructuring Schools for High Performance: Expand the School Restructuring Corps. A group of trained facilitators available to assist local schools and communities.

Restructuring the Department of Education: Create Department team plans to meet our new mission.

Meeting the Needs of All Students Through Special Education Reform: Develop recommendations to strengthen Act 230.

Creating the Best Programs for Middle Grades Students: Middle Grades Lead Schools create self assessments and three year plans.

Caring Communities: Meeting the Needs of Young Children and Their Families: Work collaboratively to establish early intervention planning teams in 12 regions of the state under the Family, Infant and Toddler Project of Vermont.

January 1993

Assessment: Establish a three year plan to increase student performance and inter-rater agreement.

Full Literacy by the Year 2000: Publish the facts about illiteracy in Vermont.

Restructuring Schools for High Performance: Identify 12 schools to participate in the second year of the New American Schools project.

Produce a videotape of what restructured schools look like.

Restructuring the Department of Education: Distribute a guide to Department services that reflects the new structure and provides easy access for all customers.

Evaluate Commitment to Quality training and plan further training, support and continual updates.

Another way Vermont reached out to gain public support was by addressing commonly held concerns about changes in the classroom environment. Restructuring evokes multiple perceptions from citizens about staffing, building changes, and teaching approaches. Change is threatening, and for many restructuring implies layoffs and cutbacks. To address these concerns, Vermont prepared a videotape to document the impact reform would have on their children's classrooms.

Vermonters are also invited to "school report night" to get a firsthand look at what their children are doing in school. The state is shifting its system of evaluation from being solely dependent on standardized tests, to one in which student progress is documented through authentic assessments in student portfolios. Although educators are becoming more comfortable with changing the testing process, parents are not yet familiar or experienced with the new techniques. Vermont has made an effort to work directly with parents and the community to be sure they understand the changes being made in testing. This is based on the belief that when confronted with evidence that their children are capable of creative, complex work, Vermonters will support reforms more easily.

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Over the past ten years, Governors have focused much effort on communicating the importance of education reform to citizens in their states. For instance, Mississippi Governor William Winter led a legislative effort in 1982 to make his state's schools more competitive with those in other southern states. Governor Winter gave eighty-two speeches on education during a six-month period in 1982. His staff spoke another 532 times on the issue. South Carolina Governor Richard Riley led a year-long campaign for education reform that resulted in an education improvement act in 1984. Governor Riley convened blue-ribbon citizen task forces, conducted public opinion polls, and held statewide public forums. He also mobilized public support through a television campaign called "A Penny for Their Thoughts," which promoted a one-cent sales tax increase to support the proposed South Carolina reforms. In January 1983, Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander began a fourteen-month effort to promote his ten-point school reform effort, the Better Schools Program. Governor Alexander traveled the state extensively between January 1983 and March 1984 to build a constituency for his proposed reforms, community by community. Once the reform passed, he spent the remainder of his term as Governor developing community task forces to help implement the act.

Four states have recently conducted or are in the process of conducting educational issue campaigns. Three of the states—Colorado, Missouri, and Oklahoma—focused their efforts on ballot initiatives. Florida, the fourth, is conducting a campaign to build local support for the implementation of a recently approved statewide education act.

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Governor Roy Romer took a request for education reform before Colorado voters in the November 1992 regular election. The ballot initiative, Amendment 6, was called "Children First." The Governor chose the initiative option because the Colorado legislature had failed to provide a stable base for education funding. In 1988, the school finance act was rewritten to equalize districts and increase the state's share in funding education while at the same time decreasing the local property tax contribution. In this legislation, a secure long-term financial base to fund the state's increased share was not established. As a result, schools were facing a 10 percent to 12 percent reduction in funding.

The ballot issue included ten major reforms and a one-cent sales tax increase to sustain the existing level of funding. The reforms included making the system more accountable to taxpayers, raising educational performance standards, moving decisionmaking closer to the students, reducing class size in the lower elementary grades, funding preschool for four-year-olds, and linking teacher pay to performance. A sales tax increase was viewed as the most favorable mechanism for sustaining the existing rate of school funding. Prior polling showed that a sales tax increase was preferable to any other type of tax.

Private sector donors and individuals contributed $700,000 to fund the six-month campaign. Most of the funds were spent for television advertising and a massive statewide yard sign campaign. The organizing strategy relied on grassroots support from every school in every community across the state. The goal was to have a Children First team in the more than 1,200 school buildings in Colorado. Each school team included teachers, parents, and community members. The teams were responsible for getting signatures to put the initiative on the ballot and for raising money. In addition, each team assisted in the yard sign campaign. Through the efforts of the Children First teams, an unprecedented 135,000 signs were put up statewide.

Governor Romer was very involved in all public aspects of the campaign. He appeared in two of the four television commercials and made dozens of appearances at public meetings across the state. The Governor is known for his commitment to education, and the project's campaign consultants believed that the Governor's positive approval ratings made his involvement in the campaign critical. During the last six weeks of the campaign, the Governor focused his efforts in those counties where the majority (83 percent) of Colorado's school children live.

Despite the efforts of the Governor and several thousand team members, the Children First amendment failed by a 54 percent to 46 percent margin, or approximately 150,000 votes. It is important to note that the ballot was crowded with amendments, some of which may have affected the vote on the Children First amendment. One amendment, which was defeated, would have created a voucher system for school choice. Another, which passed, limited the state's ability to impose new taxes on state residents without their prior approval. It is one of the most restrictive tax and revenue limitation measures in the country and has further jeopardized school funding in Colorado.

Governor John Ashcroft and the state legislature designed the Missouri education ballot initiative to improve and fund the state's education system. The ballot initiative would have resulted in approximately $358 million in new taxes being raised. The state constitution requires that revenue increases that trigger the state revenue lid, which historically has ranged from $180 million to $400 million, be approved by the electorate. The initiative went before the voters in the November 1991 general election. In elementary and secondary education, the initiative focused on high school graduates mastering basic skills, improving vocational education, and increasing parental involvement. In higher education, the initiative would have eliminated unnecessary programs and degrees, expanded the community colleges, and increased student financial aid.

A private sector coalition raised $1.5 million to undertake a six-month communications campaign on behalf of the initiative. The resources were spent in three equal portions and were directed to paid media, phone banking and direct mail, and grassroots support. The paid media campaign emphasized television advertising with strong market penetration throughout the state. Radio advertising was tailored to different regions in the state. Only a few newspaper ads were purchased in the last three days before the election. Free media coverage was arranged for the last eight weeks of the campaign with editorial board visits to all major daily newspapers, one news event a week, and speakers' bureaus in all media markets. Press kits were disseminated to more than 600 journalists. The grassroots campaign included building a pyramid of support with educators, each of whom was asked to recruit fifteen additional volunteers for the campaign.

The early polls taken to aid the communications effort indicated that teachers would be the most effective spokespeople for the ballot initiative. The Governor, who at the time enjoyed a 75 percent to 80 percent positive approval rating, was involved on a weekly basis through free media activities. Despite all the efforts to support the initiative, it was defeated, receiving only 37 percent of the vote. The defeat was due primarily to pervasive anti-tax sentiment and public difficulty in understanding the reform measures.

Sweeping education reforms were passed in Oklahoma in 1990 based upon the recommendations of a statewide commission. The reform law cost state taxpayers an additional $230 million annually.

The education reform legislation encompassed a broad range of improvements for Oklahoma's schools. New funding provided more professional staff, higher salaries, and an incentive pay plan for teachers. Classroom size was reduced and curricula were updated and expanded to meet the diverse needs of Oklahoma students. Half-day kindergarten became mandatory statewide, and funding was provided for districts that offered early childhood programs.

Nevertheless, anti-tax groups collected enough signatures to put a repeal question on the ballot in a special election in 1991 to revoke Oklahoma's Comprehensive Education Act. At the same time, the gubernatorial campaign was underway and the repeal of the education act became a campaign issue. The winner of that race, Governor David Walters, actively campaigned in support of the education act and against the repeal.

Governor Walters created a special single-issue election eight weeks prior to when voters would consider the repeal question. A private sector coalition raised $1.5 million to keep the education act in place. The majority of funds were spent on an aggressive television and newspaper advertising campaign that targeted both urban and rural parts of the state. Outside consultants recommended limited use of free media coverage on the ballot issue in order to keep to a minimum the free media options available to the opposition. Those seeking the repeal had few resources for paid advertisements and were dependent on free media opportunities. The campaign was successful in engaging two of the state's largest daily newspapers in an editorial debate over the repeal. The *Tulsa World* opposed the repeal, while the *Daily Oklahoman* supported it. During the eight-week campaign period, both papers' editorial pages analyzed the ramifications of a repeal for students and taxpayers.

The messages of the pro-reform campaign were kept simple. They stressed "No Repeal" and "Your kids have a right to a good education." The proponents of the repeal argued that there was waste and inefficiency in state government, and that the state could pay for needed educational services without a tax increase. Notwithstanding anti-tax sentiment, the repeal failed, thereby sustaining the education act even though it required increasing personal and corporate income taxes.

Governor Lawton Chiles and Education Commissioner Betty Castor worked to secure legislative passage of Florida's Blueprint 2000 in April 1991. This education reform effort focused on returning control of the schools to the local level. The decentralization effort was designed to include school-level accountability measures. For each school, the law created an advisory council of community members, faculty, and staff to prepare a school improvement plan, evaluate the school's progress, and assist the principal and school faculty. In addition, the law created the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability to develop and implement a statewide education reform and accountability system that incorporates seven goals. These goals address student and school performance, hold schools and districts accountable for reaching certain performance standards, and provide flexibility so that schools and communities can work together to meet the needs of their students. No initial funding was required to undertake these changes in the education system.

Since the passage of the Blueprint 2000 law, the focus of the Governor and the education commissioner has been on local-level implementation. A privately funded two-year public awareness campaign is underway to inform and involve all education partners in the local reform effort. Without the involvement and acceptance of local school leadership, parents, and teachers, the implementation of Blueprint 2000 will not occur. A live, statewide television call-in show, public service announcements, tabloid newsletters, and information kits have been used thus far in the campaign. In addition, public hearings have been held throughout Florida to accept input on the ongoing development of Blueprint 2000.

The public communications campaign to inform the various stakeholders of this reform effort is referred to as, "Operation Education." The campaign was unveiled in September 1992, approximately a year and a half after the original legislation passed, and it is expected to cost between $150,000 and $200,000 annually for the two years it is in operation. To promote the local nature of this reform effort, the education commissioner asked each school superintendent to appoint a representative for Operation Education to help disseminate information to the parents, the media, and the local business and education communities.

Governors' staff associated with recent issue campaigns offered the following advice on what they would do if involved in another campaign.

1. **Use private sector funding to pay for the campaigns.**
2. **Collect and use polling data to determine the message and who should deliver it.**
3. **Determine an appropriate length for the campaign, using as short a time period as possible to avoid allowing the opposition to build momentum.**
4. **Rely on paid television advertising to reach the electorate with the reform message.**
5. **Use outside consultants to help supplement staff expertise on the communications aspects of the campaign.**
6. **Develop a clear, concise message about the proposed reforms.**
7. **Use grassroots organizing to accomplish a variety of campaign tasks, including raising money and organizing the "get the vote out" efforts.**
8. **Pursue legislative action, if the option is available, rather than going directly to the voters for approval of education reform initiatives.**

As states develop strategies on ways to build public understanding and support for education, a major national strategy is also underway. Keep the Promise is a multiyear campaign sponsored by The Advertising Council, a private nonprofit organization of volunteers that distributes public service advertising campaigns. This campaign offers valuable lessons and approaches that can be applied to state efforts to build public awareness, support, and commitment to change. It also provides an opportunity for states, and Governors' offices in particular, to link local projects and organizations to a national call to action.

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Keep the Promise, a five-year public service campaign launched in November 1992, aims to raise awareness of the urgent need to change the public schools. It encourages citizens to act by inviting them to call a toll-free number for information about education and ways to become involved in promoting reform. The Advertising Council is conducting the campaign, and Young & Rubicam (Y&R), a leading national advertising agency, is donating its creative talent to this effort. The campaign is sponsored by the Education Excellence Partnership (EEP)—a coalition of The Business Roundtable, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Governors' Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Alliance of Business. Focus groups conducted to test various communications approaches found that people considered a coalition of business, educators, and government credible sponsors of a message on education reform.

Over the next five years, the campaign will have three stages focusing on creating awareness of the situation, fostering understanding for the need to change, and increasing public involvement. EEP believes that significant change is not possible without a change in attitudes. During its first stage, the campaign is trying to convey to the public the importance of schools changing to meet the new demands of a changing world and workplace. EEP believes that no substantive change will occur until the American public not only wants it, but demands it. The partnership stresses that indifference toward public education must change before education reform can occur.

The campaign was designed to address the paradox that although many Americans concede that problems exist in the nation's schools, most see little or no problem in their own community schools. Despite the pervasive influence of education on the nation's quality of life, most adults do not regard themselves as stakeholders in the country's education system. Three-fourths of all Americans do not have children in the public schools and frequently do not see education as an issue that is relevant to them.

The findings from polls and focus group discussions shaped the Keep the Promise campaign strategy. Past Advertising Council campaigns, such as the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and the United Negro College Fund (memorable for "A mind is a terrible thing to waste"), have demonstrated that public service campaigns can measurably change public attitudes and behavior—the first step toward involvement and active participation. The strategy for Keep the Promise focuses on the promise and potential in every child and the commitment of this nation to an education for every child. Keep the Promise intends to awaken citizens to the need for reform and then move them to act. Campaign ads present an urgent call for reform, but also leave the viewer hopeful and ready to act.

To test its assumptions and the effectiveness of its creative concepts, Young & Rubicam (Y&R) commissioned focus groups in the summer of 1992. These groups were asked to respond to five different creative concepts developed by Y&R for a television ad for the Education Excellence Partnership campaign. In tone and message, the ads ranged from challenging and urgent to conformist and reassuring. All of them shared the theme of Keep the Promise, emphasizing the promise inherent in children and the need for all Americans to help children realize their promise.

The following findings of the Y&R research shaped the final campaign strategy. Y&R found that an effective communication strategy to mobilize public interest in education would:

- focus on keeping the promise to America's children;
- establish a clear link between the potential tragic consequences of the lost potential of individual children and the premise that all schools must change;
- humanize the situation because generally people appear to be motivated more by their concern about children than by abstract references to the system;
- avoid the suggestion that the initiative is limited in scope only to special programs, schools in disadvantaged areas, and special needs children;
- balance the sense of crisis with a sense of possibility for change and betterment because the aim is not to create a sense of hopelessness;
- suggest school success stories;
- offer concrete steps that individuals can take;
- provide a local involvement strategy;
- support individual and collective responsibility for providing quality public education by appealing to American pride and patriotism; and
- leverage the collaborative sponsorship of the campaign that acknowledges the need to change and the commitment to work together to improve education.

Text of Keep the Promise Television Ad

ANNOUNCER: October 14th 1987, a small child is discovered trapped in an abandoned well in Midland, Texas. Minutes become hours. . . America stops breathing. . . The entire country waits and hopes and prays.

No country comes to the aid of a child the way we do.

Yet today, millions of children need our help. They're lost in an education system no longer able to prepare them for today's competitive world. But the real tragedy is that a lot of these children will never live up to their promise.

The world is changing. America is changing. And more schools have to change to keep up with the times.

Imagine if the same effort that went into saving that little child in Texas, went into keeping the promise that every child in America gets the best education. And has a real future.

ON THE SCREEN: KEEP THE PROMISE LOGO.

ANNOUNCER: Call 1-800-96-PROMISE and we will send you information on how you can help change the schools in your community.

ON THE SCREEN: The Business Roundtable, U.S. Department of Education, National Governors' Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Alliance of Business.

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The campaign message is being delivered by national and local television, radio, and print media. Broadcast time and print space have been donated by the media that agree to run the advertising. The importance of the EEP campaign lies in its projected results—a change in public attitudes about education, leading to increased public understanding and involvement and resulting in change in schools. To ensure that the ads are as effective as possible in promoting such change, all of them include the invitation to call the 800 number.

When callers reach the 800 number, the operator asks for their name and address. This information is then forwarded to a mailing house that sends information on education programs in the caller's community or state. The caller receives the following materials, which are designed to promote involvement:

- a checklist, which the caller can use to determine the effectiveness of schools in his or her community;
- postcards (preprinted with a message about education reform) that the caller can send to the Governor and other key decisionmakers in his or her state; and
- a resource list of state or local organizations and people that the caller can contact to become more involved.

Governors' offices can link interested and concerned citizens to specific state and local reforms and projects through the resource list. This list of people and organizations within the caller's state offers a means to channel the caller's interest and concern into action. Several states have chosen to include organizations outside of government as potential resources to call. Examples of these include parent, teacher, and administrator associations; business and other private sector organizations; and state coalitions for education change. EEP also can provide state-specific mailing lists of callers to education or political coalitions within states so that coalition members can communicate directly with people who called the 800 number from their state.

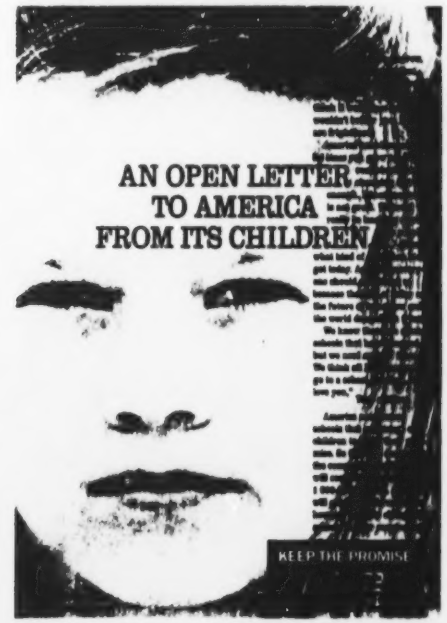
In addition to providing contact names and organizations for concerned citizens to contact, many states have instituted broader strategies to help increase interest in education among callers inquiring about Keep the Promise.

Minnesota. The Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation (a public-private partnership) has established a state hotline in cooperation with Governor Carlson's office, the department of education, and Minnesota 2000. The "Minnesota Message" provides callers with information and referrals to groups and individuals involved in key initiatives who are working toward the Minnesota goals.

Through the hotline, inquiries are logged and information about fifteen different contacts is sent to the caller. Based on calls received by the Minnesota 2000 hotline last year, the "Minnesota Message" is anticipating 1,200 calls a year.

Maryland and Michigan. Both Maryland and Michigan are sending letters from their respective Governors in response to inquiries generated by the Keep the Promise campaign. The Michigan letter also summarizes state initiatives that address each of the goals and the progress made thus far.

Keep the Promise recognizes that one of the keys to addressing education issues is to provide access to information and ways to get involved at the state and local levels. It also offers valuable information and resources for state policymakers and their staffs as they think about mobilizing public support, including research findings on public awareness of the need for change; tested communication strategies that maximize public engagement; and opportunities to link state efforts with initiatives underway at the national level that foster public awareness, understanding, and involvement.



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